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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Terry Goddard Warns Consumers about Home Repair Scams

(Phoenix, Ariz. – August 8, 2006) The monsoon season has again brought high winds and rain to Arizona. As residents deal with cleanup and repairs, Attorney General Terry Goddard cautions them to be careful of unsolicited contractors going door-to-door and offering help.

"These scam artists have begun to show up in neighborhoods across the state looking to make a quick dollar," Goddard said. "They seem friendly and interested in helping homeowners fix storm damage to their homes. Don't fall for it – they will take your money and run."

Some workers will claim to have extra materials because they are doing work in the neighborhood. They will offer the homeowner a "discounted" price so the contractor won't have to throw away the materials (often for roofing or paving). Typically, the homeowner is given a verbal quote, but not a written estimate for the job.

After the job is complete, the homeowner may get a final bill that is thousands of dollars more than what was originally quoted. In some cases, the scammer will claim to have performed additional work without the homeowner's consent. The scammer demands immediate payment, and in some cases refuses to leave, trying to intimidate the homeowner to pay in full.

Goddard provides the following red flags and tips:

Red Flags

- Salespeople going door-to-door offering low-cost services or "free" inspections.
- Repair people who drop by and tell you, "We just happen to be working in your neighborhood and have time to fix your house," or "We have been working in your neighborhood and have leftover supplies we can provide extra cheap."
- Repair people who cannot provide a local address or telephone number.
- Repair people who cannot provide their contractor's license number.

Tips to Protect Yourself

- Shop around! Ask for written estimates from at least three contractors.

- Request a list of references and check them before agreeing to hire anyone.
- Check with the Arizona Registrar of Contractors (www.azroc.gov) to make sure the contractor you are considering has a license.
- Make sure the scope of the project, the price and any other relevant terms are spelled out in a written contract.
- Do not let a stranger into your home. Talk outside or through a security screen door. If you want the salesperson to come back for a more extensive presentation, make sure a friend or family member is with you. It is not rude to refuse a sales presentation.
- Never allow yourself to be hurried into making a decision. No reputable contractor will try to pressure you into hiring them.
- Get the address and phone number of the company and the credentials of the sales representative before hiring anyone.
- Do not be rushed into hiring a contractor because you are told the repair "is an emergency" or that your problem "is in violation of city code."

If residents are approached by people who appear to be repair scam artists, please report them to the Attorney General's Office by visiting the Web site at www.azag.gov and submitting an online "Consumer Complaint" or calling the Office at 602.542.5763 in Phoenix, 520.628.6504 in Tucson or 1.800.352.8431 outside the metro areas.

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